TEACHING ENGLISH

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EDITORIAL BOARD

F. L. BILLOWS J. G. BRUTON N. E. WILLIAMS

EDITED BY

F. L. BILLOWS

British Council, Indra Palace Lodge, Block "H", Connaught Place, New Delhi

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EDITORIAL

We must apologize for the late appearance of the January number of Teaching English together, in one volume, with the April number; as excuse, we can only claim pressure of other work. We are introducing a new feature into the April section, which we hope to make permanent, if our readers agree to its usefulness and interest, an analysis of the progress of teaching a poem.

No one should suppose that the way of presenting a poem which is shown in this number is the only way which we can recommend to teachers of presenting a poem; it is just one individual teacher's way of bringing a poem as it is, with its own sounds and rhythm and its special significance, within the reach of the boy and girl who will shortly be entering their final year of English. It aims to make the learning of a poem as much as possible a communal venture related to the experience of the individual boy or girl, but not restricted to that experience. No drawing, dramatization, or explanation should be allowed to stand between the pupil and the poem; they should only be enough and never more than is required to open up the poem itself to the pupil and ensure the contact between the pupil and the poem being close. We believe that the teaching of poetry in a practical language course, when objectives are limited and time is short, can only be justified if it leads to a genuine quickening of the imagination and intellect of the pupil. An alert and fully engaged pupil, his mind open to new experience and keenly interested in discussing problems of human relationships, is better able to speak, and so to think and to write, than one who has wrestled privately with opacity of meaning and failed to achieve contact, or only done so after an effort which he feels is out of all proportion to the reward.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN OUR VERNACULARS.

By K. S. Karanth

The reading habit of the literate adults in our country is rather poor, considering the number of books printed and sold. Before we show our eagerness to turn a large number of adults into literates, it would be better, if we pause to consider why the already literate are lapsing back into illiteracy. A large number of people after leaving school cease to read books and the few that still read, restrict their reading to stories and sensational news. Our education should have made us take greater interest

in reading books that would go a long way in helping us to enlarge our view of life and things round us. Even literature has to do the same, in as much as it brings to us, a writer's experiences. But what we see is not that. Our reading habit stops as soon as we leave the schools. I feel that this is mostly due to want of proper books. Books thrust on a child by compulsion, however good, create an aversion for reading. Text-books come under that category. Beyond these text-books a child's reading is almost nil. There are not enough suitable books for the young, to stimulate such voluntary interest. I base my remarks on the books that are available to the Kannada-speaking child and I suspect that the prospect in other Indian vernaculars is not better. Even in the English language this gap is large enough. Let me try to explain what I mean.

Reading must become a matter of habit with the children throughout their school career, and this interest can only be created through the availability of suitable material. I think, then the habit would continue even after one leaves school. Such interest should come from the material itself and not from imposition by the teacher; for then it would suffer the same fate as text-books.

I would like to put the children under two roughly recognisable groups—the child stage, say between the age of six and ten, and the adolescent age i.e. between the ages of ten and sixteen. This is roughly the High School period. Their mental ages may not in all cases exactly fit in with these age limits. The needs of the former group differ much from the second one. The child stage is a stage wherein the child would like to live in a world of fantasy. That is why stories like Alibaba or Alladin interest him. Fantasy is fantasy and not meant to be real. The child will soon outgrow this stage and treat *jinnee* and demons as pure story creatures. But the stimulus to imagination the child gets out of such stories, is great. It will expand the child's capacity for dreaming. When I was a boy of that age, I had no such books at all in my language. So for about 3 to 5 years of my high school life, English books supplied my wants. I devoured books like, 'Books for the Bairns', well illustrated and sold at as low a price as a penny each. The hold that Hans Anderson has, on the minds of the young is so great, because in him we find a genius that while telling fanciful things to a child, builds up the emotional side of the child mind also. That aspect is absolutely essential in any child story. It is this quality that has to be slowly developed and harnessed to the other vital needs of a child's relationship with its environment. Else he will merely remain a story-monger. The

number of books available to our children in this field is too poor in our vernaculars. It has to be enlarged both in number and scope. Nature can become a treasure house of interest to the child. It is so full of mystery and adventure. Have we any such books at all in our literature? Stories like "Panchatantra" did not exploit the elements of nature. Its author used the story for a moral purpose. The child loves the story for he likes animal life.

Nowadays we seem to be having a crop of child stories in books and magazines. But of what quality? Mere mystery, battles and magic do not constitute the essence of a child story. The essence lies in its capacity to rouse emotional sympathy towards proper characters, and also stir up positive visions in the mind of the child. Hans Anderson is a magician that way. Each country has produced one or two such persons and many are the stories they have produced. Our writers would better bring to the child this vast treasure house of the world in each vernacular.

Not less important, is the manner in which you tell a story. I mean its language. Writers in our vernacular do not seem to realise the importance of this. We know that a child's vocabulary is limited; that it picks up its language from its people, by stages; that language gains strength and beauty through live idioms and expressions. It is the proper and graded use of such a language that can help a child. Our child story writers seem to believe in the use of an artificial language, instead of the natural. They use queer and pompous terms. There is no limit to the vocabulary. In this respect we would better study the old 'A. L. Bright Story Readers' where grading of language has been successfully done. But in the vernaculars the child is forced to read the same type of pedantries whether he is aged six, ten or even sixteen. In fact it is the adult, that is really reading our children's magazines.

From the study of my two children aged six and seven, I feel that the language used in our stories is positively harmful. Children soon pick up queer words, for sheer novelty's sake and try to use them, irrespective of their meaning or the shade thereof. If language has to be an instrument of precise thought and expression, the study of words has to be precise also. Substitution of any word for any other, without showing the difference in shade, discarding the use of live expressions, and current words in favour of queer words and expressions, will make our thought and expression equally loose.

Now I come to the second stage of a child's life namely, the adolescent period. For this period, books that we have are still

smaller in number. Even in English, it is so. Here the age is an age of not only dreaming but also one of adventure. 'Jason and the Golden Fleece' alone will not be enough. We need a lot of 'Treasure Islands'. A boy or girl's interest in nature can very much be enlarged at this age. They can be taken round about the wide World as done in 'Peeps at Many Lands'. They can follow the perils and mysteries of Travel adventures, such as expeditions to the Antarctic or to Everest. But it must not be made too scientific. They could be carried back to past civilisations, and the history of the past can be nicely linked up with the present. The stories written for them should be as real as possible. How many such books have we in our Vernaculars?

Here too, suitable language, emotional approach, vividity of expression are essential needs. To-day our high school boys have no such books at all, suited to their age and mind. So they read books, mostly romance, things that are meant and written for adults. A boy or girl may understand the language of such books, but cannot understand the problems that such sex and love romances pose. So, very likely, their own view of these things becomes partially or totally distorted.

If we take pains to supply a large number of books, covering a larger area of interest, and that is done well, the effect will not be entirely lost in adulthood.

Before closing, I must say that good production is very essential to make books popular and stimulate interest. Proper illustrations, good printing, suitable types, attractive and meaningfull covers,—all these become necessary if our attempt is to be successful.

If interest in life is created, from childhood then it is bound to persist, a good deal later,. This has to be created through the availability of suitable books in the mother tongue of the child. Methods and materials that have been used in English books meant for children could greatly benefit our children if they were more widely used for children's books in the regional languages. Until adequate books have been produced in the vernaculars, we cannot afford to neglect the suitable material available in English.

HANDWRITING IN SCHOOLS

K. V. Thiruvenkatachari

Handwriting has been the most neglected part of the teaching of a language. Till recently it has not received its due attention

and it continues to be so even after the new orientation given to the teaching of English.

One cannot deny the fact that there are several useful suggestions offered under the title 'Teaching Writing' in the *Guide Book* published by the Government for the improvement of handwriting right from the beginning stage. Though these suggestions are not fully adequate for the teaching of this subject, still they are very valuable and worth experimenting upon ; but all the same, one can find in a good many schools that this part of language teaching does not receive the impetus it should from the teachers concerned. The reasons for this are quite obvious. Most of the teachers who handle English in the early stages are generally inexperienced ; or, if experienced, they think their duty is only to develop, in a way, the speech habits of the pupils and also to teach them how to marshal their ideas into a good piece of composition work. They feel hesitant to bestow the right attention on the development of handwriting as it has been regarded as a dull, monotonous piece of work hitherto.

The writer has been conducting experiments on handwriting since the introduction of the new syllabus on the same set of students with a view to developing sustained interest even in this so-called drudgery and also to promote *legibility and accuracy along with speed.* This new venture, though barely three years old, has begotten very encouraging results.

Experience has shown that one can teach handwriting more effectively without the printed copy-books available on the market as they only contain a large number of unrelated, unfamiliar words beyond the capacity of the pupils even to pronounce. This can be an important reason why the pupils often get dejected, and neglect doing the daily transcription in such printed books. No printed copy-books of any kind have been used so far with the class under discussion. On the other hand, charts containing alphabets were prepared in the order suggested in the *Government Guide Book* and used for teaching the writing of the alphabet.

For this purpose 'Chart Making' was introduced as a hobby in Form III where there were a few boys who could draw most of the charts, flash cards and pictures that were very useful for teaching through the Direct Method. This hobby, while serving as a means to tide over the difficulties in the preparation of teaching aids, has helped the pupils learning this hobby a great deal to learn the proper way of writing.

Only the Print Script was taught in Form I, first small letters and then capital letters. The different methods of writing of the various pupils were carefully watched. It was noted that such

letters as have too many hooks or bends presented much annoyance to the pupils and gave rise to illegibility. Such letters are abundant in Cursive Script, and so one has to take rather more time for mastering the strokes of the letters of this script. Therefore this script was taught in the latter half of the second year only for recognition purposes.

When joining of letters was taught in the second year, it was found out that the following letters in Print Script (small) did not facilitate speed and easy joining :—

a, b, g, p, v, z, s.

So these letters were substituted with the corresponding ones from the Cursive Script.

'Work for work's sake' is the highest philosophy and it is only an ideal in life. Without some kind of motivation no piece of work can be expected to be done efficiently, let alone by young children at school.' So a device was found to introduce interest in the work of daily transcription and ensure its being done systematically. Marks were awarded daily for a maximum of ten in the first two years and in the first term of this third year. The average quantity of writing was about a page per day from only those lessons that were very familiar through reading. When the progressive total came to two hundred, the marks obtained by the various pupils were reduced to ten, and these marks were taken along with the others for judging the standard of attainment in English every month.

Due attention is being paid to neatness, spelling, formation and joining of letters, spacing between words and sentences, and to the several other factors which influence legibility. Individual guidance is being administered to pupils according to their special needs. Right from the beginning this system of teaching handwriting has promoted a healthy competition amongst the pupils and it is seen that transcription has become a work of great joy to them.

It is pointed out in the *Guide Book* that the aims in teaching handwriting are *legibility and speed, the former being the more important.* By this statement many teachers are liable to lay most emphasis on legibility alone to the detriment of the other. The teachers must understand the real import of this statement. What is wanted of the pupils is *'legibility with speed'* and not *'legibility with the snail's speed'* or *'speed without legibility'*. One can see in most schools that no special efforts are taken to achieve this 'legibility with speed'. Why is it so ? What is the method of attaining this standard ? Here teachers themselves really need guidance to guide pupils. (*To be continued*).

ONE HUNDRED SENTENCES IN TWENTY LESSONS

By K. M. Willey

The early stages of language teaching are the most difficult and progress often seems discouragingly slow. Yet both the difficulties may be made less and the speed of teaching increased by the use of symbols.

Step 1. The first sentence pattern and five variants

This is a man		See No. 1 on page 42
,, ,, ,,	*woman*	,, ,, 2
,, ,, ,,	*boy*	,, ,, 3
,, ,, ,,	*girl*	,, ,, 4
,, ,, ,,	*baby*	,, ,, 5

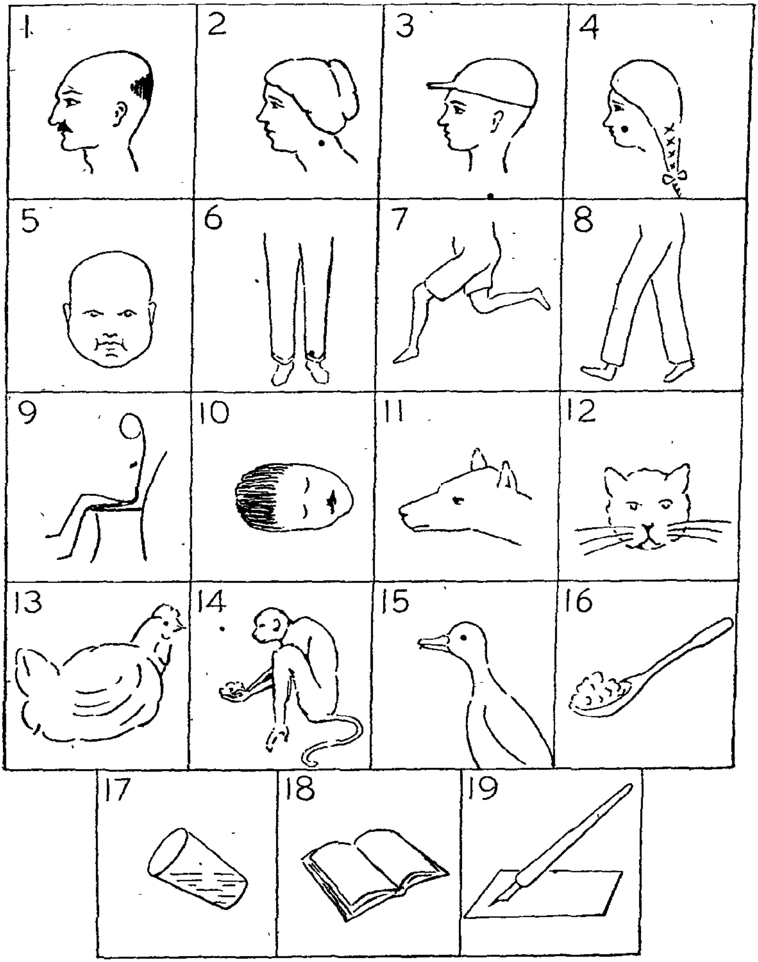
With absolute beginners and a class of twenty, we have found that these symbols can be identified in the first lesson and both identified and the sentences said, in Local Standard English by the end of the third lesson. For larger classes, further time may be needed.

The teacher draws these either on the blackboard or better in thick line on a piece of Bristol board about quarto size. If this is done, a cord should be inserted so that the cards can be hung up.

The cards have to be shown over and over again in the first lesson as the teacher says the appropriate sentence ; at first always in the same order and then in any order. After a time, the class will start to murmur something like the sentences and when this becomes fairly general is the time to play the first recognition game. If the reactions of the children in this game are not correct nine times out of ten, the teacher must go back to saying the sentences.

In the second or third lesson, individual speech should be required if possible or by twos or threes if the class is very large. One way is to take the class out of doors where the pupils can file past the teacher and touch the drawing with a pointer. In this way individual answers can be quickly given. Where the mother tongue would have three or even two words for *This is a man,* it is helpful to get each child to count four words as it says the sentences, so avoiding *This is man.*

Recognition Games : These can be played as team games especially in large classes where the first member or each of two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(or four) teams is called out and given a stick : as the teacher says the sentence, the first pupil to point out the appropriate drawing gets a point for his team.

Alternatively, as the teacher says a sentence he points to the correct drawing when the first to clap should get a point ; or occasionally to the wrong drawing when the first to fold his arms (–1 for clapping at the wrong place !) gains the point.

Step 2. The second sentence pattern

The	*man*	*is*	*standing*	See No. 6 on page 42
„	„	„	*running*	„ „ 7
„	„	„	*walking*	„ „ 8
„	„	„	*sitting*	„ „ 9
„	„	„	*sleeping*	„ „ 10

This may take three lessons or four.

Step 3. Using the first sentence pattern and then the second

See Nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15

This is a dog, etc. *The dog etc. is standing etc.*

This will probably occupy not more than two lessons.

Step 4.

eating, drinking reading, writing

See Nos. 16, 17, 18, 19

The first two activities can be applied to all the agents presented so far, but reading and writing can be attributed to the first four only. This may take three lessons.

Games : Further teaching games for Steps 2, 3, and 4 can be added to those given, although there is a use for the early games still.

Personal Papers : Individual drawings are made, one on each piece of paper, and distributed to the class, one to each pupil. (This involves no great effort on the part of the teacher). When the teacher says a sentence e.g. *The baby . . . is sleeping,* the pupil (or pupils) who has a representation of a baby, stands up showing his paper, and so will the one with the symbol for *sleeping.* This can be played for some time, the papers being changed sometimes. This is a *Recognition* Game. For *speaking,* the teacher can silently indicate two symbols on the board when one boy will rise and say *The baby* and another *is sleeping.*

Team Game :

One member of a team points to two symbols : his opposite has to give a correct sentence to score a point for the team and require a sentence in turn.

(This game, with various adaptions, can be played at many levels of language teaching, though it is hardly possible to give instances here).

Step 5. Combination of patterns I & II

This is a man: *he is standing*—using *he, she, it*

Perhaps two or three lessons are needed for this Step.

Achievement

How much can be achieved and in what time by these means? The readers may not agree with the number of lessons that are regarded as necessary for each Step though these have been based on actual experience. But for the moment, accepting in each case the larger number, a summary is as follows :

Step 1.	Four	lessons	in	which	5	sentences	and	7	words	are taught
Step 2.	,,	,,	,,	,,	25	,,	,,	6	,,	,, ,,
Step 3.	Two	,,	,,	,,	25	,,	,,	5	,,	,, ,,
Step 4.	Three	,,	,,	,,	28	,,	,,	4	,,	,, ,,
Step 5.	,,	,,	,,	,,	25	,,	,,	3	,,	,, ,,

Total : Sixteen lessons in which 108 sentences and 25 words are taught.

More then has been achieved than the title allows, and from this point on, progress can be equally rapid using normal modern methods and teaching games.

POETRY IN THE FIFTH FORM.

THE DEMON LOVER

By F. L. Billows

In the teaching of poetry, ballad gives us the best compromise between simplicity and maturity. If we choose our ballads carefully they need not be too difficult for boys and girls whose mother tongue is not English, but they are completely adult in attitude and can be taken seriously and enjoyed by all whatever

the age or degree of sophistication. I first tried the "Demon Lover" on a fifth form of boys in a high school attached to a training school. I taught it a week later to a fifth form in a boys' high school in a small country town where the standard of English is high, and I have since taught it to fifth forms of boys and girls in various schools, it has invariably gripped their attention and at a refresher course where I taught it to a demonstration class,* teachers who had watched the demonstration did a spontaneous dramatization of the poem a few days later.

There is no single right way to teach the poem and I have sometimes emphasized one aspect of it and sometimes another, but I never talk about it before teaching it, though I do in an informal conversation, first make sure which, if any, unusual expressions are unfamiliar. A teacher, who is teaching his usual class, should know what is likely to be unfamiliar to the majority in the class. He will not so much explain these expressions as make them familiar by using them. For instance, he may ask a boy to hold his tongue and then ask him to try and speak. He can then say that the expression "Hold your tongue" is a rather rude and unfriendly way of saying "Be quiet", but this is only the preliminary; he will then say "Hold your tongue" several times in a loud angry voice with a furious expression on his face, stamping his foot, as if in a rage. He can ask several boys to do the same until they simulate the right degree of fury; he shall seem to be teaching not so much the words as the facial expression and gestures.

He can then ask the class if they think a married woman with two small children would be likely to go away with a man who is not her husband and leave her husband and children for ever. Would she soon miss them and want to go back? Have they ever heard of anyone doing such a thing? Do people sometimes say they won't do something and then, after all, do it? Examples may occur to the teacher that are likely to be known to the class; if not, he may invent a story of a boy who, at first rejected temptations to do something attractive that would take him away from his duty, but eventually changed his mind and joined in a dishonourable but exciting escapade that suddenly, however, seemed to turn bitter or break up around him. The problem can be discussed a little without the teacher passing any moral judgments, but in such a way that the individual members of the class may be helped to make their own. All or any of this preparatory discussion may be left out according to the degree of maturity of the class, and the teacher should not, in any case, indicate in any way what bearing the discussion may

THE DEMON LOVER

"O where have you been, my long, long love,
This long seven years and more?"
"O I'm come to seek my former vows
Ye granted me before."

"O hold your tongue of your former vows,
For they will breed sad strife;
O hold your tongue of your former vows,
For I am become a wife."

He turned him right and round about,
And the tear blinded his ee;
"I would never ha'e trodden on Irish ground,
If it had not been for thee."

"I might ha'e had a king's daughter,
Far, far beyond the sea;
I might have had a king's daughter,
Had it not been for love o' thee."

"If ye might have had a king's daughter,
Yerself ye had to blame;
Ye might have taken the king's daughter,
For ye kenned that I was nane."

* * * *

"If I was to leave my husband dear,
And my two babes also,
O what have you to take me to,
If with you I should go?"

"I ha'e seven ships upon the sea—
The eighth brought me to land—
With four-and-twenty bold mariners,
And music on every hand."

She has taken up her two little babes,
Kiss'd them both cheek and chin:
"O fair ye well, my own two babes,
For I'll never see you again."

She set her foot upon the ship,
No mariners could she behold ;
But the sails were o' the taffetie,
And the masts o' the beaten gold.

She had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When dismal grew his countenance,
And drumlie grew his ee.

* * * *

They had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
Until she espied his cloven foot,
And she wept right bitterlie.

"O hold your tongue of your weeping," says he,
"Of your weeping now let me be ;
I will shew you how the lilies grow
On the banks of Italy."

"O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills,
That the sun shines sweetly on?"
"O yon are the hills of heaven," he said,
"Where you will never win."

"O whaten a mountain is yon," she said,
"All so dreary wi' frost and snow ?"
"O yon is the mountain of hell," he cried,
"Where you and I will go."

* * * *

He struck the top-mast wi' his hand,
The fore-mast wi' his knee,
And he brake that gallant ship in twain,
And sank her in the sea.

have on the poem and the problem presented in it. Each is parallel to the other, and they need not meet.

The teacher should then read the poem straight through in a clear, natural voice, emphasizing, but not exaggerating, the rhythm; with some gesture and mime, but not enough to take the attention of the class away from the words. He should not

pause except for a few seconds at the break in continuity between the fifth and sixth verses, but a change in tone of voice from indignation to a soothing, ingratiating tone at that point will be more effective than a long pause. At this reading the pupils should be able to get a general impression of the sounds and rhythm of the poem and a vague idea of the story, but there is no need for them to understand everything. Half the delight in learning the poem will consist in a gradually increasing consciousness of the poem, like the oncoming of the dawn, that successive readings can bring. The pupils should listen to the reading with books shut so that they can concentrate on what they hear and what they can understand at a first reading.

The second reading is the opportunity to bring what the pupil needs of the meaning into full consciousness, and in particular to put the pupil in contact with the pictorial element of the poem. For this, repetition, re-arranging of the words, drawing on the blackboard, reference to the concrete experience of the pupils, mime, dramatization, discussion and simplification can be used, but always to lead to the text itself, not as substitutes for it. As little explanation as possible should be given, and after the explanation of any word or phrase the teacher should always ask himself. "Was this piece of explanation really necessary? Has it contributed anything to the understanding of the poem that the pupil could not just as well have found out for himself through close knowlege of the poem?" Although we may call this the second reading of the poem, each separate verse or couplet or even line, may be read half a dozen or a dozen times and repeated by the pupils during the course of the reading.

"O where have you been, my long, long love
This long seven years and more?"

This may be read out twice, and then we may ask a pupil what his mother says if he comes home very late from school. Whether the answer comes or not we have opened the minds of the pupils to a concrete situation and we say: "O where have you been, my boys?", or "O where have you been, my son?", and then, after several repetitions in the class, we repeat the two lines again. "How long had he been away?", we may then ask and if no answer comes, repeat the two lines:

"O where have you been my long, long love
This long seven years or more?".

I then usually ask several boys and girls how old they were seven years ago and about how big; this gives them a feeling of the passing of a long period of time, so that they can understand why she thought he would never come back again.

"O where have you been my long, long love
This long seven years and more?"

"How many times does she use the word 'long'?" we may ask. From this we may see that "long", "a long time", was uppermost in her mind. "How long was he away?" we ask,

"More than seven years," is the answer:

Now we read the whole of the first verse

"O where have you been my long, long love
This long seven years and more?"
"O I've come to seek my former vows
Ye granted me before."

"Did he answer her question?" we ask. If no answer comes we say the verse again. In some repetitions of this verse we may substitute "promise" for "granted", to return to "granted" as the final version. We go on repeating the verse until we get the answer:

"No, he didn't answer her question; he told her why he had come, but she hadn't asked him that", or words to that effect.

"What do you think she had promised him seven years before?", we ask next. If the class can't answer we read the first two verses through:

"O where have you been, etc.

"What is strife and why should her former vows breed strife, sad or otherwise?" Or words to that effect can lead one into a short discussion of the situation outlined in these two verses and the probability of strife, who will make it, who will be angry, who may fight, and how, with what, etc., so as to make the situation clear.

After this I read the first two verses again and continue slowly into the next verse, turning and simulating sorrow and brushing away a tear as I do so:

He turned him right and round about
And the tear blinded his ee.
"I would never have trodden on Irish ground
If it had not been for thee."

Treading can be demonstrated and a barefooted boy can be told to tread on another's foot, or on a piece of chalk, anything that gives a memorable situation or sensation, but wastes no time; then I tread on the platform or an area of the floor, possibly marked out rapidly with chalk, saying: "He came ashore from a ship, Ireland is an island—a map can be shown—but he would not have come off the ship on to the land, he would not have trodden on the ground, the ground of Ireland, Irish ground. He would not have trodden on Irish ground, if it had not been for

this girl." "Did he love her?" we may then ask.

"Yes" will probably be the answer.

"Good; how do we know?" If there is hesitation in the answer we repeat the *lines:*

"O I'm come to seek my former vows
Ye granted me before."

We then repeat the first three verses and go on to the fourth verse and ask—a map is a help here— :—

"Tell me a country that is far beyond the seas." The answer may be "England", "America", "Australia". Then I ask: "What country would be far beyond the sea to an Irishman?" This helps the pupils to identify themselves with the point of view of an Irishman, and they will probably say "Italy", or "Egypt". And then we may repeat the question: "Did he love her?" and get the answer "Yes", and then ask: "How much did he love her?" and hope to get the answer: "Very much, because he didn't marry a king's daughter." If we don't get this answer at once we can work towards it by reading the fourth and fifth verses again, reading "knew" for "kenned". After this we can say that "kenned" means the same as "knew", and thereafter use "kenned" without further comment. I then read the first five verses once more.

The sixth verse I just read slowly in a rather meaning, calculating, ingratiating voice, sketching quickly on the blackboard a figure of a woman with two small children in her arms:

"If I was to leave my husband dear
And my two babes also
O what have you to take me to
If with you I should go ?"

stressing and resting a little on "with" and "you". I go straight on through the seventh verse with a change of tone to suggest a resolute and even ruthless man:

"I have seven ships upon the sea
The eighth brought me to land
With four and twenty mariners
And music on every hand",

then I ask how many ships he had. I draw a few simple ships on the blackboard while waiting for the answer. If the answer is slow in coming or if it is "seven", I read the verse again, and usually then get the answer: "Eight". I sketch an evident sailor on the blackboard—saying that sailor and mariner mean the same thing—playing the violin, and, if I feel energetic, another playing the accordion, and we can mime the sailors playing and dancing and even get a sea-shanty sung, if there's time, but

without a break—and, indeed, we can have background music of singing to the next verse as we plunge on into it:

She has taken up her two little babes
Kissed them both cheek and chin,

everyone touching cheek and chin, as we read the words

"O fare ye well my own two babes
For I'll never see you again."

The platform on which the teacher's desk stands can now become in a flash the ship, but otherwise I draw a figure mounting a ladder up the side of a ship drawn on the blackboard and the lady mounts and sets her foot on the ship.

"She set her foot upon the ship
No mariners could she behold
But the sails were of the taffetie,
And the masts of the beaten gold."

As I read these words I draw in the masts stronger and draw the sails, if there is coloured chalk the masts in yellow and the sails in pink or violet chalk, to give the necessary impression of luxury. A gold ring and a silk saree can give the valuable concrete sensations of gold and stiff silk that help to stimulate the imagination to see and almost feel the ship. Without pause for any explanation or questions we drive on into the next verse.

She had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When dismal grew his countenance—and here my face grows visibly dismal—
And drumlie grew his e'e —

and my eye becomes drumlie, frowns into a fearful fierceness. I tell the class that a league is three miles, and I ask them to tell me how many miles they had gone when his face grew dismal and his eye grew drumlie or fierce. Then I repeat the verse and the bright boys and girls call out "Nine". Then I get several to make their countenance dismal, as we all repeat the verse.

They had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,

"How many miles was that?" I ask, and at once comes the answer "Nine".

They had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
Until she espied his cloven foot,

I quickly draw a goat's foot on the blackboard and say that the old idea was that the devil had a goat's foot. If I have a suitable shoe on I draw a cleft on the end of the shoe with chalk and repeat the verse

They had not sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three—looking down at my cloven foot—Until she saw his cloven foot
And wept right bitterly.

In reading this verse I read alternately "espied" and "saw" until I feel the meaning is established. After that I stick to "espied". I weep right bitterly in mime, and get members of the class to do so too, as we go straight on:

"O hold your tongue of your weeping" says he,—I say savagely to one of the weepers, or to several in turn—

"Of your weeping now let me be"—
equally savagely—

"I will show you how the lilies grow"—drawing quickly two or three lilies on the blackboard—

"On the banks of Italy". I then repeat the verse with less exaggerated mime, pointing to the lilies as we speak them and perhaps sketching a map of Italy and South Europe rapidly. Here again a map is useful.

O what hills are yon, yon pleasant hills—I say winningly like a wife trying to change the subject, after her husband has given an exhibition of rage—

"That the sun shines sweetly on?" and I sketch a line of hills on the blackboard, making them sunny with yellow chalk, if I have any, but my voice turns back no furious rage in:

"O yon are the hills of heaven," he said "Where you will never win." I repeat the couplet with "come" instead of "win" and then repeat the verse, this time with "win".

"O whaten a mountain is yon," she said—and here I sketch a savage-looking white mountain-top.

"All so covered with frost and snow—almost *whiningly*, and then, like a thunder-clap

"O yon is the mountain of hell," he cried
"Where you and I will go."

I then repeat the verses through from:

She had not sailed a league, a league—and continue straight on into the last verse, striking an imaginary top-mast with my hand and an imaginary fore-mast with my knee. I rub out the drawing of the ship on the blackboard and redraw the bow and stern and the collapsing masts with a gap of sea between where the middle of the ship was, and re-read the last verse, and then again.

And he broke that gallant ship in two
And sank her in the sea.

Finally repeating the whole verse again, with "brake" and "twain" instead of "broke" and "two"

After this comes the third reading; I read the whole poem through, stopping to let the class fill in the ends of lines or key words such as "heaven" or "hell" or "taffetie" or "beaten gold" or "husband", "strife", "wife", etc.

This work can all be done in a period of 45 minutes with a good fifth form, if no time is wasted on non-essentials, on irrelevant explanations or questions that do not help the pupil to understand the poem better. They can then be told to open their books or it can be distributed to the class on sheets, but the poem can just as well be left for 24 or 48 hours to settle into their minds before they read it for themselves. At the next lesson the teacher will read through the poem once or twice and get the pupils to repeat what they can of it before he lets them look at it. I rather like to ask them to give the poem a title before I let them see it. He will not spend more than 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour on it, and then go on to other work. He may repeat it once more at the end of the lesson. He will then tell the class to study the poem for homework, looking up any words that are still not quite clear, in the dictionary.

The purpose of presenting the poem in this way, with mime, dramatization, singing and drawing on the blackboard, is not that the pupils will necessarily have any difficulty in understanding the words and expressions of the poem, but that they should experience it as vividly as possible and live as completely as they can in the poem while it is being read. They should be brought as quickly as possible to direct experience of the poem as it is and should not be allowed to be kept away from the poem itself by other words. Neither the singing nor the drawing need be good, they should only be enough to stimulate the imagination of the pupil to make the jump into the world of the poem.

When once the poem has been presented in this way, and worked over for homework, it can be repeated and digested in various ways. One way is to divide the class into groups and get them to mime it (mime is a form of acting without words being spoken by the actors) while one of the group reads the text, or dramatize it (with narrator and actors), or do a puppet show of it, or all recite it in chorus with appropriate gestures and facial expressions. In dramatizing it they can make their drama out of the story, using, and expanding the story with, perhaps, the dialogue only of the poem. Or they can make an entirely new drama on a story such as that suggested in the introduction, which interprets the story of the poem in terms of the boys' and girls' own experience. Each group can choose a different means of interpretation, or they can all choose the same medium and

compete to give the most effective presentation of the poem through it. The best can then present the poem to the whole school in the lunch hour or in the early evening. The important point is that in giving the poem their own interpretation, and being corrected by being referred back to the poem if they misinterpret it, they are helped to realize the poem fully, and the problems it deals with, without the traffic being purely a traffic of words that may or may not have been fully realized. Words and expressions are learnt most effectively and economically in relation to clearly realized and felt situation; the teacher, in presenting a poem in this way, is ensuring that language is being used consciously and effectively to do clearly recognizable work that interests and absorbs the pupil. All the language practice, all the oral and written composition, all the practices in fluency, that the pupil needs at this stage can be involved in working on a poem in this way, and the poem is an emotionally and aesthetically satisfying kernel to all this work.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Letter to a Municipal Commissioner

16th February, 1956.

The Muncipal Commissioner.

Dear Sir,

You asked me recently to make some recommendations for the improving of the teaching of English in the schools under your care. I have been thinking a good deal about the question and would like to make the following suggestions :

First of all, as I suggested to you when I was with you, it would be greatly to the advantage of all the schools if they could have a comprehensive collection of gramophone records and either a good electric gramophone which can be moved from class-room to class-room—a portable gramophone is not sufficient for a class —or a gramophone or pick-up attached to the radio in the headmaster's room which can easily be relayed to the various classrooms where the record is to be heard. I should suggest that if one record lasting 4½ minutes is played every day to the whole high school, this will not take much time from the curriculum and will have very beneficial results. Certain records could then be

played several times over in a particular class. I attach a list of gramophone records which we can recommend.

If the finances of the municipality are sufficient, it would be very beneficial too if a tape recorder could be bought for your schools and used by turn in each. We are willing to speak verses and sing songs on to tape if it is sent to us to this office, and we could in this way give you a short anthology of poetry, song and prose, which could be available for all the schools in your town.

I suggest both for English and for Social Studies that the provision of a film-strip projector for each school will be highly beneficial. To those teachers working in your schools who have attended refresher courses of ours, I have demonstrated the use of the film-strip projector for teaching language.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of a good school library with plenty of illustrated books and also, if possible, a form library for each form, all books simplified to the degree of knowledge of the pupils at that stage of English. It is an advantage, of course, if the school can have a full-time librarian, say a retired teacher, but this is not essential and one of the staff should be able to take charge of the library but have all the work done by volunteer committees of the pupils. This arrangement does not involve the teacher in very much extra work, or if it does, he should be made free for a few periods in the week from teaching.

Ultimately if your schools have not yet got one, I should suggest that it would be desirable to buy a moving film projector which can show documentary films, travel films and so on, to help the social studies as well as the English language courses in the schools.

The suggestions I have given here need not be realized all at once but could make a long term programme for gradual improvement of the facilities provided by the schools. I suggest your starting with books and gramophone records.

Yours faithfully,
Sd. F. L. BILLOWS,
Education Officer, British Council, Madras.

QUESTION BOX

1. Should we not use the Mother Tongue for the administrative work of the lesson, for example "Please shut the door, clean the blackboard, lend me a pencil" etc., or "I want you to

come and stand in a ring round the blackboard?" Also to explain a language game?

It always seems to me that a language which is not good enough to ask somebody to open the door in, or to call the class into a circle with, can hardly be recommended to our pupils as good enough to tell them about anything more complex, or to learn physics or chemistry, or a technological subject at the university. In short, if we can't use the language for quite simple everyday tasks that have to be done here and now, there is small likelihood that our pupils will use it for really difficult tasks that can be postponed. Anyone who has ever taught small boys football, with no barrier of strangeness of language, knows that there is a great deal of pushing and pulling of limp bodies, and a great deal of uncomprehending gazing from these bodies into the distance, as a shower of their mother tongue is poured over them, before we get them responding to our orders. In teaching a language we are not only thinking of getting the door open in the quickest way possible, we are trying to get our pupils used to using a language for all the practical needs of everyday life. I believe Madam Montessori, wrote somewhere that if she sees one little boy having his cap put on straight by his mother and his overcoat correctly buttoned, and another putting on his own cap crooked and buttoning his overcoat on the wrong buttons, she knows that the second mother is an educator and the first is not, and that ultimately the second little boy will put on his cap and overcoat straighter and quicker than the other one.

As a matter of fact, any hesitations in responding to orders in English disappear as soon as the order becomes familiar. The skilful teacher knows that he must use only orders that he is likely to repeat often, and also that he must do what he can to prepare his pupils for unfamiliar orders. For instance, if he finds himself wanting to say: "I want you to come and stand in a ring round the blackboard" he should reflect whether the word "circle" is not more familiar from drawing circles on the blackboard, if so he will discard the word "ring" for the word "circle", or he may refer to a ring and make clear its meaning by talking about it before he allows himself to give the order in that form. In any case no single order is an isolated phenomenon, the simplest are easy to use without their meaning having to be explained, such as: "Please give me your pencil"—holding out your hand and, if necessary, taking the pencil—, or "Please turn on the light"—with a gesture in the direction of the light. If it seems necessary one can demonstrate, formally, giving the pencil and taking it, or one can turn on the light saying: "I am turning on the light,"

and then turn it off and say: "Now you, Govind, turn on the light." *These simple orders lead up, or should be made to* lead up, to the more complex ones by gradual degrees, though such a command as: "Come and stand round the blackboard" can be used as and when necessary, the refinement of the ring being added after the simpler command has become familiar. There need be no laboured explanation of any of these commands, the using of them and the successful response suffice to teach them.

2. Do you think that an average child can begin to learn two different scripts simultaneously without confusion? As an Indian child starts learning the alphabet of its mother tongue at the age of 5, do you think it advisable to start English at that age?

I think it is theoretically desirable to start teaching a child English at the age of 5 because it learns without any trouble at that age. But it should learn entirely through activity and write and read nothing in English for one or even two years. The practical difficulty that makes it really impossible to start teaching English at that age on a large scale is that the task of training enough teachers is too great for a state system to attempt. Some private schools do however teach English with great success to children of that age.

3. Do the other nationals, whose mother tongue is English, like Americans and Australians, follow the accents and phonetics of the British people in their schools? If it is not so, what objection is there if Indians also follow their own way of speech because many Indians also have English as their mother tongue?

An article in our April 1955 number dealt with this question. Briefly, if there were a standard Indian pronunciation easily comprehensible outside India there could be no objection, but we know in practice that a Bengali speaks English differently from a Malayali, and a Punjabi differently from a Tamilian, and all, if they speak with a strong local accent, are difficult to understand outside their own language area. The prime purpose of languages is to unite people; in so far as they fail to do this they fall short of fulfilling our needs perfectly, though they may fulfil most of our needs adequately.

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